

Message Text

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E.O. 11652: NA
TAGS: PINT, CZ, XH
SUBJECT: CZECHOSLOVAK CP RECALL JANUARY 1968 PLENUM

SUMMARY: FULL-PAGE EDITORIAL IN PARTY DAILY DEVOTED TO JANUARY 1968
CC PLENUM IN NON-POLEMIC TONE RECALLS WHY NOVOTNY AND LATER DUBCEK
HAD TO BE REMOVED FROM PARTY LEADERSHIP AND WARSAW PACT INTERVENTION
INVITED. HUSAK IS PRAISED FOR BRINGING PARTY BACK TO PROPER
MARXIST-LENINIST PATH, BUT THERE IS POSSIBLY A HIDDEN STING IN THE
EDITORIAL SINCE AT JANUARY 1968 PLENUM FUNCTIONS OF PRESIDENT OF
REPUBLIC AND FIRST SECRETARY OF PARTY WERE SEPARATED. EDITORIAL
IS NOTEWORTHY AS EFFORT TO TAKE INITIATIVE AWAY FROM INTERNAL AND
EXTERNAL CRITICS OF POST-AUGUST 1968 EVENTS IN THIS DECENNIAL.
END SUMMARY.

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2. CZECHOSLOVAK PARTY (CPCZ) DAILY RUDE PRAVO AND SLOVAK PARTY DAILY
PRAVDA ON JANUARY 5 CARRIED A PAGE THREE FULL PAGE EDITORIAL
DEVOTED TO 10 TH ANNIVERSARY OF JANUARY 3-5, 1968 CPCZ CC PLENUM,
AT WHICH ALEXANDER DUBCEK REPLACED ANTONIN NOVOTNY AS FIRST SECRETARY.

EDITORIAL DISCUSSES SHORTCOMINGS WHICH REQUIRED OUSTER OF NOVOTNY AND
SAYS "JANUARY 1968 WAS NECESSARY," BUT ALSO NOTES THAT SEEDS OF THE

PROBLEMS OF THE DUBCEK ERA WERE SOWN AT THAT PLENUM WHEN "RIGHT-OPPORTUNIST AND REVISIONIST" STATEMENTS BY SIK, VODSLON, SMRKOVSKY AND SLAVIK WENT UNANSWERED. IT GOES ON AT SOME LENGTH TO DESCRIBE HOW DUBCEK'S WEAK AND INDECISIVE LEADERSHIP PERMITTED "RIGHTIST" FORCES

TO GAIN CONTROL OF INFORMATION MEDIA, TO INTRODUCE TENETS OF "MARKET SOCIALISM" AND TO MOVE RAPIDLY TOWARD A MULTI-PARTY SYSTEM, LEADING FINALLY TO ATTEMPTS TO CARRY OUT THE "COUNTERREVOLUTIONARY" PLATFORM OF THE "2000 WORDS" STATEMENT.

IT ACCUSES DUBCEK OF FAILING TO INFORM THE PARTY OF THE CONCERN EXPRESSED FOR THE FUTURE OF SOCIALISM IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA BY THE

SOVIET AND OTHER FRATERNAL PARTIES AT CIERNA NAD TISOU AND BRATISLAVA. FINALLY, IT SAYS, "THOSE COMMUNISTS AND THOSE HONEST CITIZENS OF OUR COUNTRY WHO REMAINED TRUE TO THE IDEALS OF SOCIALISM..." SOUGHT AND RECEIVED AID FROM THE USSR AND FOUR OTHER SOCIALIST COUNTRIES. FINAL THIRD OF EDITORIAL IS DEVOTED TO HOW CPCZ, UNDER HUSAK'S LEADERSHIP, RETURNED TO PROPER MARXIST-Leninist, INTERNATIONAL PROLETARIAN ROAD.

2. FINAL SECTION ALSO POINTEDLY DENIES THAT THERE IS ANY ROOM FOR LIBERALIZATION IN POLITICO/CULTURAL OR ECONOMIC FIELDS. IN ONE PLACE IT ASKS: "WHAT KIND OF SOCIALIST DEMOCRACY WOULD IT BE THAT GRANTED SPACE TO ANTI-SOCIALIST ELEMENTS TO THE DETRIMENT OF WORKING PEOPLE, TO THE DETRIMENT OF THE INTERESTS OF SOCIALISM?" AND LATER CALLS FOR: "CORRECT ENFORCEMENT OF THE LEADING ROLE OF THE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PARTY, SCIENTIFIC MANAGEMENT OF SOCIETY IN HARMONY WITH THE PRINCIPLES OF DEMOCRATIC CENTRALISM AND SOCIALIST DEMOCRACY, MANAGEMENT ON THE BASIS OF A UNIFORM BINDING PLAN OF DEVELOPMENT OF THE NATIONAL ECONOMY AND OF A UNIFORM PROGRAM."

3. COMMENT: MOST IMMEDIATELY NOTEWORTHY FEATURES OF THE EDITORIAL ARE ITS TIMING, ITS CALM, REASONABLE TONE AND ITS BALANCE IN PRESENTING AT SOME LENGTH THE FAULTS OF BOTH NOVOTNY AND DUBCEK. WITH REGARD TO RECENTLY RENEWED ATTACKS ON NOVOTNY, IT SHOULD BE NOTED THAT THE CONTINUING DISCREDITING OF THE ESSENTIALLY CZECH LEADERSHIP OF THE COUNTRY DURING HIS STEWARDSHIP EMINENTLY SUITS THE PURPOSES OF THE POST-1968 MAINLY SLOVAK LEADERSHIP TEAM OF HUSAK AND COMPANY. THE JANUARY 1968 PLENUM ALSO PROVIDES A CONVENIENT PEG ON WHICH TO HAND A REASONED AND (FROM A MARXIST-Leninist POINT OF VIEW) REASONABLE ADVANCE REPLY TO ATTACKS ON THE REGIME TO BE EXPECTED FROM INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL CRITICS AS THE DECENNIAL OF AUGUST 1968 APPROACHES, ONE THAT WILL APPEAL TO MANY BASICALLY CONSERVATIVE CZECHS AND SLOVAKS WHO THOUGHT "PRAGUE SPRING" WENT TOO FAR TOO FAST. THE EDITORIAL APPEARED NOT ONLY AT ABOUT THE SAME TIME AS CHARTER 77 DID LAST YEAR (AND PROVIDES A CLEAR, LOW-KEY WARNING TO THOSE WHO MIGHT PUBLISH A CHARTER 78) BUT ALSO JUST FIVE DAYS BEFORE HUSAK'S 65TH

BIRTHDAY JANUARY 10, IN THE LATTER CONTEXT IT SERVES AS A TESTIMONIAL

TO THE MAN WHO THINKS HE STEERED THE CPCZ ON A SAFE COURSE BETWEEN THE RIGIDITY OF NOVOTNY AND THE INDECISIVENESS OF DUBCEK. THAT THE JANUARY 1968 PLENUM WAS THE OCCASION FOR THE OFFICIAL SEPARATION OF THE FUNCTIONS OF PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC AND OF FIRST SECRETARY OF THE PARTY MAKES REFERENCE TO IT A TWO-EDGED SWORD, SINCE IT AROUSES SPECULATION THAT SUCH A SEPARATION OF HUSAK'S FUNCTIONS IS BEING CONSIDERED; ALL EVIDENCE AVAILABLE SO FAR, HOWEVER, SUGGESTS THAT SUCH SPECULATION IS OVERLY SUBTLE, MORE SUITED TO BALKAN THAN TO CZECHOSLOVAK POLITICS, ALTHOUGH RUMORS ARE CURCULATING THAT HUSAK WANTS TO RELINQUISH HIS GENERAL SECRETARY POST.

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4. ONE FORMULATION NEW TO US APPEARS IN THE EDITORIAL, A REFERENCE TO THE "CPSU AND OTHER FRATERNAL PARTIES OF COUNTRIES OF REAL SOCIALISM." A KNOWLEDGEABLE ROMANIAN COLLEAGUE TELLS US THIS IS A "NEW NOTION" WHICH HE HAS SEEN USED IN SOME EAST GERMAN AND SOVIET JOURNALS, BUT HE WAS UNABLE TO SAY WITH CONFIDENCE WHICH ARE THE "REAL" SOCIALIST COUNTRIES.

5. THE TONE AND STYLE OF THIS EDITORIAL CONTRAST SUFFICIENTLY WITH THE NORMAL TURGIDITY OF RUDE PRAVO'S EDITORIALS AND WITH UTTERANCES BY BILAK AND FOJTIK IN DECEMBER TO RAISE THE QUESTION OF WHETHER IT IS PART OF POLITICAL MANEUVERING AMONG THE TOP LEADERSHIP. OUR ROMANIAN COLLEAGUE SUGGESTS THIS IS A MATTER OF PERSONALITIES RATHER THAN OF POLICY CLASHES AND WE ARE FOR THE TIME BEING INCLINED TO AGREE WITH HIM. CERTAINLY ANY CONFLICT THAT MAY BE HINTED AT IS THE OLD ONE BETWEEN "HARD" AND "HARDER" LINE, NOT BETWEEN "HARD" AND "MODERATE" OR "SOFT". ONE OR BOTH OF THE NEW PARTY SECRETARIES (BENO AND POLEDNIK) MAY BE GETTING THE FEEL OF PROPAGANDA LEVERS. FROWICK

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